

OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education

New Zealand

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

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This summary of main conclusions is drawn from *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: New Zealand*. The full report is available on the project's website: www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy.

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Executive summary

Since the establishment of self-managing schools in 1989, New Zealand has one of the most devolved school systems in the world. Average student learning outcomes are very good by international comparison even though there are concerns about the proportion of students that are not performing well. The current priorities for the school sector are to lift student achievement in literacy and numeracy, enable all young people to achieve worthwhile qualifications and ensure that Māori students achieve education success “as Māori”. As part of the national strategy to achieve these goals, New Zealand has developed its own distinctive model of evaluation and assessment characterised by a high level of trust in schools and school professionals. There are no full-cohort national tests and teachers are given prime responsibility to assess their students’ learning. Teachers also have a good degree of ownership of their own appraisal and are involved in school self-review. In recent years, school self-review has become the centre piece of school evaluation while the Education Review Office provides an external validation of the process and focuses on building self-review capacity. The principle of evidence-based policy making is well established and there is a high degree of self-awareness at various levels of the education system. Building on recent reforms and developments already underway, this report suggests a range of policy options to ensure that the overall evaluation and assessment framework is coherent, efficient and responsive to the needs of New Zealand’s education system.

Further develop and embed the National Standards within New Zealand’s evaluation and assessment system

National Standards were introduced in primary education in 2010 to provide clear expectations for student learning in mathematics, reading and writing and help teachers make and report overall teacher judgements (OTJs) based on a range of assessment evidence. In a context where there is a general consensus against national testing in primary education, the introduction of Standards is seen as an alternative way to make information about student learning more consistent and comparable. However, further developments are necessary to embed the Standards within the primary school system. These include (1) Ongoing investment in teacher professional development to build teachers’ capacity to assess students in relation to the National Standards; (2) Stronger support for systematic moderation processes to ensure that OTJs are reliable and nationally consistent; (3) Better articulation between the National Standards, the national curriculum and existing assessment tools; (4) Clearer statements regarding the kind of information that standards-based reporting can and cannot provide and the uses of reporting information that are considered appropriate; and (5) Further work to ensure that the Standards’ focus on literacy and numeracy does not marginalise other learning areas where measurement of performance and progress is more challenging.

Consolidate teaching standards and strengthen teacher appraisal processes

A framework of teaching standards is essential as a reference point for teacher appraisal. The current co-existence of two sets of teaching standards and the lack of clarity about their respective use call for their consolidation into a single set of standards providing a clear shared understanding of what counts as accomplished teaching. The consolidated standards should describe competencies for different career steps of teachers and should allow for teacher registration to be conceived as career-progression appraisal. Such appraisal is summative in nature and should include an element of externality such as an accredited external evaluator, be based on classroom observation and a range of information demonstrating teacher effectiveness, and take into consideration the teacher's own views. At the same time, regular teacher appraisal as part of performance management processes should be conceived as a largely school-based and formative process (developmental appraisal). To ensure that all teachers benefit from systematic developmental appraisal, it is important to build the capacity of school leaders or expert teachers to undertake specific appraisal functions within the school and to ensure that the process is validated externally, for example as part of Education Review Office (ERO) reviews.

Ensure that school planning and reporting is used effectively for evaluation and improvement

While schools are required to have both annual planning and reporting and self-review processes, the school annual reports do not appear to be well integrated into either school self-review or ERO's external review processes. Also, while annual reports are sent to the Ministry of Education for accountability purposes, the potential to use them for system monitoring and evaluation is not exploited. Given a significant level of dissatisfaction with annual reporting by schools, the nature and use of these reports should be revisited. There is a need to closely examine the relative costs and benefits of different forms of reporting and the form that teachers and school leaders would find most productive. If self-review and ERO reviews are both formative, the annual review should reflect ways in which they have contributed to professional development and school improvement. To optimise the use of annual reports for school improvement, they could be used by the Regional Offices of the Ministry of Education to provide constructive feedback and engage with schools and Boards of Trustees to support school improvement work (see below).

Strengthen school collaboration and regionally-based support structures to spread and share effective practice

In the context of self-management, individual schools can be relatively isolated and have limited opportunities for collegial networking and peer learning. There are a range of policy options to strengthen the connectedness of schools and help spread and share effective evaluation and assessment practice. These include (1) Providing cluster funding for groups of schools to pool evaluative information and engage in collaborative analysis and interpretation of data; (2) Supporting the collaboration of schools with an external facilitator or "critical friend" such as a professional development provider; (3) Relying as much as possible on practitioners in the role of peer evaluators or participating in ERO review teams; and (4) Building further on recent developments to strengthen the Regional Offices of the Ministry of Education and enhancing regionally based school support structures.

Reinforce professional learning opportunities for teachers, school leaders and trustees

While there has been strong focus on building evaluation and assessment competencies at the school level, further investment in professional development is necessary to ensure that practices are consistently effective across New Zealand. Teachers need to develop not only the capacity to use, interpret and follow up on results obtained from nationally provided assessment tools, but also to develop their own valid and reliable assessment tools, adapt assessment to diverse learner profiles and communicate and report assessment results effectively. Alongside general training in assessment literacy, teachers and school leaders also need to further develop skills to collect school-wide assessment data; disaggregate data for relevant sub-groups; and interpret and translate assessment information into improvement strategies. Central agencies could consider developing a unique set of teacher competencies in assessment to set clear targets for initial teacher education and continuing professional learning. Given the key role of school leaders in New Zealand's devolved education system, there is also a need to firmly embed a focus on effective evaluation and assessment in the competency description, training, performance appraisal and support materials for school leaders. To ensure Boards of Trustees fully play their role in school evaluation and principal appraisal, it is also important to set apart resources to develop and sustain the evaluation capacities of trustees.

Ensure that evaluation and assessment respond to diverse learner needs

New Zealand's approach to evaluation and assessment aims to respond to diverse learner needs and gives particular attention to groups for which there is evidence of system under-performance such as Māori and Pasifika. However, there is room to optimise assessment practice for different student groups, improve school processes to identify and respond to groups at risk of underperformance and strengthen the national information system regarding diverse groups of students. In addition to increasing the availability of assessment instruments in Māori, it is important to train teachers to be sensitive to cultural and linguistic aspects of learning and assessment. When developing consolidated teaching standards and strengthening teacher appraisal processes (see above), it is essential to keep a strong focus on the effectiveness of teachers in improving student learning outcomes for all students, particularly for Māori and Pasifika. School leadership training and capacity building for school self-review should include a strong focus on monitoring the participation and achievement of priority groups such as Māori, Pasifika, English language learners and students with special educational needs. For education system monitoring, it is important to obtain better data on Māori learning outcomes in primary education through the implementation of a revised version of the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) in Māori-medium settings. The Ministry should also consider gathering more information on students' linguistic profiles.

Further strengthen consistency between different elements of evaluation and assessment

While the national evaluation and assessment agenda is well developed and solidly based on research evidence, a number of elements could be better integrated and aligned to form a coherent framework. As outlined above, this includes linkages between the National Standards, the national curriculum and student assessment, the coherence between two different sets of teaching standards, and the articulation of annual school reporting with school evaluation and education system monitoring. To optimise complementarity and prevent inconsistencies of evaluation practices at different levels of the system, the New Zealand authorities should consider developing an overall mapping or framework for the entire evaluation and assessment system. This should involve taking stock of existing research syntheses, position papers, standards and indicators and integrating them in a coherent and concise framework. The overarching goal would be to propose a higher level of integration and coherence of the different components of evaluation and assessment. The outcome of such a mapping process could be a concise document providing a framework for evaluation and assessment approaches at student, teacher, school and system level. This process should be used as an opportunity to identify missing links, determine priorities and develop a strategic plan for the further development of the framework.

Conclusions and recommendations

Education system context

New Zealand offers inclusive schooling for an increasingly diverse student population

New Zealand's schools offer inclusive education for all students in their local area regardless of the students' level of impairment or educational need. Schools are comprehensive at all levels and few distinctions are made between academic and vocational programmes. The country has a bicultural and bilingual Māori and European heritage which is reflected in the provision of Māori-medium education and, more broadly, the development of education pathways that support and encourage Māori language and culture. Schools also cater to an increasingly diverse student population, with over half of the school-age population expected to identify with multiple and non-European ethnic heritages within the next five years. *The New Zealand Curriculum* states its commitment to strong equity principles, including valuing cultural diversity and inclusion of all students in a non-sexist, non-racist and non-discriminatory way. For evaluation and assessment, this implies that approaches at all levels are expected to consider and respond to individual learner needs and school community contexts.

National priorities relate to further improving performance of all New Zealanders while closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performers

The performance of New Zealand students is significantly above the OECD average in all areas assessed by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2009). But while on average New Zealand students are among the top performers in the world, there is a large dispersion of achievement scores. Performance differences are most pronounced *within* schools rather than between schools. This indicates that greater efforts are necessary to adapt education to needs of highly diverse learners within the comprehensive school. While some Māori and Pasifika students show high performance, Māori and Pasifika students are over-represented at the lower end of the performance distribution. The key priorities for schooling outlined in the Ministry of Education's Statement of Intent (2010-2011) relate to lifting student achievement in literacy and numeracy, all young people achieving worthwhile qualifications and ensuring that Māori students achieve education success "as Māori". Evaluation and assessment are a key element in the national strategy to improve performance and raise equity in education.

Responsibility for school education is highly devolved

New Zealand has one of the most devolved school systems in the world. As part of a major administrative restructuring, the 1988 Tomorrow's Schools reforms devolved responsibility for the management of individual schools to Boards of Trustees consisting of elected members from the school community. Boards of Trustees hold a wide range of responsibilities including strategic management, school self-review, employment of staff and appraisal of the school principal. Boards of Trustees, together with the principal and school staff, are also in charge of developing and implementing the local curriculum. As the national curriculum sets out key competencies and achievement objectives for each of eight learning areas rather than prescribing curriculum content, self-managing schools have a large amount of freedom and flexibility in designing their own teaching programmes to fit the needs of their local student population. In line with the overall governance model, responsibilities for evaluation and assessment are also highly devolved, with school leaders, teachers and students playing a key role in measuring their own performance and progress to inform self-improvement.

Strengths and challenges

New Zealand has a coherent national agenda for evaluation and assessment but some components could be better aligned

The key purposes and principles of evaluation and assessment in New Zealand are well articulated. The national evaluation and assessment agenda is solidly based on research evidence and characterised by a high degree of coherence. Particularly positive features include the strong emphasis on the improvement function of evaluation and assessment, the commitment to respond to diverse learner needs and the focus on evidence-based policy and practice. Clear learning goals and performance expectations are provided in the curriculum, the National Standards, the national qualifications framework, teacher standards and indicators for school review. However, while each of the different components of evaluation and assessment are well developed, there is no policy document or written strategy on the overall framework for evaluation and assessment. Hence, it is not always clear how evaluation and assessment at student, teacher, school and system level are intended to link together and be complementary. There are a number of linkages or articulations between different elements of the evaluation and assessment framework that could be further strengthened. These include articulations between the National Standards, the national curriculum and student assessment; the coherence between two different sets of teaching standards; linkages between teacher appraisal and school evaluation; and the articulation of school reporting with school evaluation and education system monitoring.

Evaluation and assessment build on trust and collaboration, but there are challenges in ensuring consistency of practices

New Zealand has developed its own distinctive model of evaluation and assessment that is characterised by a high level of trust in schools and school professionals. Teachers carry the prime responsibility for student assessment, have a good degree of ownership of their own appraisal and are also strongly involved in school self-review. Students are

engaged in self-and peer-assessment and encouraged to provide feedback for school evaluation purposes. In recent years, schools' own self-review has become the centre piece of school evaluation while the Education Review Office (ERO) provides an external validation of the process. The development of the national evaluation and assessment agenda has been characterised by strong collaborative work, as opposed to prescriptions being imposed from above. As can be expected from such a devolved approach, ensuring consistency in the implementation of national evaluation and assessment policies is a challenge. There is evidence that while schools are obliged to have assessment, appraisal and evaluation approaches in place, there is large variation in the extent to which these processes are effective and aligned.

School self-management encourages professionalism but requires ongoing investment in capacity building

School autonomy and self-management create good conditions for school leader and teacher professionalism and continue to be strongly valued by school leaders. This governance structure recognises that schools know their contexts best and allows professionals to adopt a diversity of evaluation and assessment practices, thereby creating conditions for innovation and system evolution. At the same time, there is increasing concern about the complexity and breadth of school leaders' and teachers' responsibilities regarding evaluation and assessment, requiring a new set of skills which many may not have acquired in their initial training. Boards of Trustees also play a key role in planning, reporting and self-review tasks but their preparedness and capacity to fulfil this role is highly variable. The effectiveness of the overall evaluation and assessment framework depends to a large extent on whether those who evaluate and those who use evaluation results at the different levels of the system have the appropriate competencies. In the context of self-management, individual schools can be relatively isolated and may have limited opportunities for learning from effective practice from across the region or the country. Continuing to build the capacity of teachers, school leaders and Boards of Trustees for effective evaluation and assessment remains a priority.

Student assessment is designed to improve teaching and learning, but there is room to optimise assessment for diverse learners

Assessment in New Zealand is conceived as an integral part of quality teaching and learning and focuses less on summative end point testing. Effective assessment is described by the Ministry of Education as a circle of inquiry, decision making, adaptation and transformation – it should be “a process of learning, for learning”. Whether assessment improves learning depends to a large extent on the quality of interactions between teachers and students. In this respect, New Zealand's strong focus on the importance of helping all students achieve is a major strength. At the same time, there is still room to optimise assessments for students with diverse educational needs. While inclusive assessment practice exists in many schools, there is evidence that some schools struggle to provide adequate assessment opportunities for students with special educational needs. As New Zealand's demographics have changed and resulted in a diversification of its population, it is also important that teachers are sensitive to cultural and linguistic aspects of learning and assessment. In addition, there is a need to develop a wider range of assessment tools particularly adapted to Māori-medium education.

Teachers in New Zealand have the prime responsibility for student assessment, which requires ongoing investment in teachers' assessment capacity

New Zealand's assessment approach is based on a firm belief in teacher professionalism. Instead of implementing high-stakes national assessments to monitor student achievement and progress, the New Zealand strategy aims to build teacher capacity and provide teachers with a range of assessment tools to help them make their own professional judgements about student performance. This approach is expected to avoid some of the potential negative consequences of high-stakes testing such as curriculum narrowing, assessment anxiety and teaching to the test. At the same time, there is evidence that primary schools still vary greatly in the way they choose to deliver the curriculum, assess student results and report to parents. While this may allow schools to respond and adapt quickly to local priorities, it also raises problems regarding the fairness and consistency of assessment. A significant proportion of teachers are still at an early stage of developing their professional judgement in relation to National Standards and there is room to enhance their skills in effective reporting and communication about student learning and progress.

While National Standards respond to a specific need in primary education, there are concerns about their design and implementation

The National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were developed to respond to some of the challenges related to the wide disparity in student achievement and ensuring consistency of student assessment in primary education. They are intended to provide reference points for schools to be used in conjunction with their own assessment practices and to support teachers in making reliable judgements about student learning. Schools are also required to ensure adequate reporting to students and parents in relation to the standards. While the purpose of improving assessment and reporting practice is broadly shared across the education system, there is concern about the design and implementation of the National Standards. Teacher capacity still needs to be built for standards-based reporting to be reliable and it will take some time to develop the expertise and moderation arrangements to make nationally comparable judgements based on the standards. As a new piece that needs to be fitted into the primary education system, the National Standards also need to be embedded into schools' work with the national curriculum and require mutual adjustments with existing tools and approaches to student assessment.

Teaching standards provide reference points for effective teacher appraisal, but the existence of two different sets of standards may send conflicting messages

Teaching standards are a key element in any teacher appraisal system as they provide credible reference points for making judgements about teacher competence. Standards also offer the potential to frame the organisation of the teaching profession including initial teacher education, teacher registration, professional development, career advancement and teacher appraisal. New Zealand has two sets of teaching standards: Registered Teacher Criteria are used in the appraisal for teachers to gain or renew registration to teach, and professional standards are used as part of the employer's

performance management processes for salary progression and professional learning. While having well-developed teaching standards is a strength of the system, the co-existence of two different sets of standards risks sending conflicting messages about what teachers are expected to know and be able to do at different stages of their careers. In schools, there is often a lack of clarity about the respective purpose and use of each of the standards and, in practice, school management personnel may “amalgamate” the two sets of standards for performance management purposes.

While teacher appraisal processes are well established, there is need to strengthen links to professional development and career progression

Teacher registration processes are well established and serve to ensure that every school in New Zealand is staffed with teachers who meet agreed standards for teaching practice. Teacher appraisal as part of regular performance management processes also appears to be consolidated; it has essentially an improvement function with emphasis on teacher professional development but also serves as an attestation for salary progression. Teacher appraisal, in its different forms, is school-based and seems to be well ingrained in schools’ cultures. However, some aspects of teacher appraisal require further policy attention. First, the limited extent of input that is external to the school and moderation might not be adequate as teachers are fully dependent on local capacity and willingness to benefit from opportunities to improve their practice, see their professional development recognised and gain greater responsibility. Second, teacher appraisal could be more systematically linked to professional development opportunities. The organisation of teacher professional development varies across schools, depending in large part on school leadership. Third, there is currently no clear alignment between teaching standards, registration processes and the career structure, which may reduce the incentive for teachers to improve their competencies.

The approach to school evaluation is strongly collaborative, but perceptions of purpose are not yet fully consistent across the system

New Zealand has probably gone furthest among countries internationally towards a collaborative school evaluation model. The basic premise is that schools are best placed to analyse their own contexts and that the Education Review Office (ERO) provides an external perspective to validate or challenge the schools’ own findings. The current focus of ERO’s work is to ensure that school self-review and external review are complementary and mutually reinforcing processes. Complementing self-review by external review adds an element of distance from the internal dynamics of the school and provides the kind of perspective and challenge to assumptions and interpretations which can lead to greater rigour in the process.

At the same time, there are inevitably tensions to be confronted between ERO’s multiple accountabilities and its improvement purpose. For example, an aspect of ERO’s accountability to government is the gathering of information on the implementation and efficacy of government policies in schools visited. What may become salient in a review will depend on, and reflect, the government’s current interests. Although schools have a responsibility as Crown Entities to deliver the education priorities of the government of the day they may perceive an element of uncertainty about what will be focused on in a review, with respect to political and policy change.

The strong focus on building schools' self-review capacity is commendable and needs to be sustained

In common with systems elsewhere which are moving toward proportional review, New Zealand's differentiated review cycle is exemplary in taking account of the educational health of schools. ERO's differentiated approach recognises that while a school might promote high levels of student achievement, this is unlikely to be sustained in the longer term without effective self-review. Serious concerns about a school's self-review performance will result in an ongoing longitudinal review designed to help schools build their evaluative capacity. ERO also offers workshops and professional development opportunities to build the capacity of ERO reviewers, school professionals and Boards of Trustees. While the strong focus on self-review is commendable, there are indications that further work is necessary to ensure consistently effective self-review practices. Some schools struggle to collect, analyse and interpret student assessment data effectively for improvement and school leaders may have limited opportunities to learn from effective practice elsewhere. High expectations are also placed on Boards of Trustees members, many of whom have no background in education and little expertise in data analysis. The degree to which school leaders receive constructive support through appraisal processes is also variable.

School reporting does not appear well integrated in the evaluation and assessment framework

Schools are required to establish annual strategic planning and reporting cycles and report on their progress to the Ministry of Education. The annual reporting process is seen by some as useful in bringing a range of school data together in one document, but there is a need to clarify the purpose of this type of reporting information at different levels of the system. It appears that school annual planning and reporting cycles are not well aligned with other elements of the evaluation and assessment framework. Schools do not generally receive feedback on their reports either from the Education Review Office or the Ministry of Education in a way as to support them in their internal evaluation and further planning. While ERO's reviews focus on schools' self-review capacity, they do not systematically build on schools' annual reporting processes. Also, the reports are not systematically used by Boards of Trustees in the appraisal of school principals. Moreover, the use of school reporting information for system evaluation is limited as the reports are highly variable in format, content and quality.

There is a lack of clarity about the use of standards reporting for school and system evaluation

From 2012/13, schools will have to include information on their students' results in relation to standards in their annual reports, which raises additional questions about how this new reporting information will feed into school- and system-level evaluation. There is widespread concern that schools might be judged and compared based on their students' results against the standards. This is considered inappropriate because the standard reporting does not give information about students' rates of progress or value added by schools. The simple information about the number of students above and below the standard, disconnected from other sources of evidence, provides little insight about the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Also, while National Standards intend to provide a nationally standardised measure of students' foundation skills, assessment

practices vary between schools. If the standards information is to be used to monitor academic outcomes at the national level, further steps need to be taken to ensure that the assessment information is indeed nationally consistent.

The education system sets clear strategic objectives and monitors system performance over time, but there are still a few data gaps

An important strength of the New Zealand approach to education system evaluation is the clarity of strategic objectives, coupled with transparent frameworks for reporting on progress and performance. The Ministry of Education sets priorities through its annual Statement of Intent and an Education Indicators Framework has been developed to analyse the state of the education system and monitor trends over time. There are also national education strategies defining system-level goals for particular student groups, such as the Māori Education Strategy, the Pasifika Education Plan and the Disability Strategy. Information about education system performance is collected through a range of tools including sample-based international and national assessments, school roll returns and thematic reviews on particular schooling issues and priorities. ERO publishes Education Evaluation Reports on national education issues that inform both policy and practice. The richness of data available in New Zealand is commendable. There is still a need for more fine-grained data in specific key areas including students' and teachers' linguistic backgrounds. While New Zealand collects data on the three major ethnic groups, as the information system evolves it would also be of interest to further disaggregate data on the achievement and progress of different Pasifika groups and other cultural groups.

Education system evaluation monitors student outcomes while avoiding high-stakes testing

The education system aims to make the best use of student assessment data to inform decision making at all levels while limiting possible negative impacts of high-stakes assessment. Instead of testing a whole student cohort every year, New Zealand monitors education system performance through sample-based assessments that do not carry high stakes for individual students, teachers or schools. High quality information on student learning outcomes in all curriculum areas is collected from the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) in primary education and from assessment for qualifications (NCEA) in secondary education. These assessments cover a wide range of curriculum goals and emphasise authentic and performance-based items, including group work, hands-on tasks and project work. While it can be challenging to score such open-ended tasks reliably, New Zealand has put in place strong tools and training for assessors and a range of moderation mechanisms that ensure the consistency of national assessment results. However, NEMP was discontinued in Māori immersion schools and hence, there is currently insufficient national level information on the learning outcomes of students enrolled in the Māori-medium sector. The national monitoring system will also need to be adjusted to match recent changes such as the introduction of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and National Standards.

Policy recommendations

Further strengthen consistency between different components of evaluation and assessment

To optimise complementarity, avoid duplication and prevent inconsistencies of evaluation practices at different levels of the system, the New Zealand authorities could consider developing an overall mapping or framework for the entire evaluation and assessment system. The idea would not be to introduce a new strategy or approach to evaluation and assessment, but to take stock of existing research syntheses, position papers, standards and indicators to integrate them in a coherent and concise framework. The overarching goal would be to propose a higher level of integration and coherence of the different components of evaluation and assessment. The outcome of such a mapping process could be a concise document providing a framework for evaluation and assessment approaches at student, teacher, school and system level. This framework could outline how the different elements are interrelated and describe for each individual component (1) the purpose and goals of the process, (2) evidence-based principles of effective practice, (3) available tools and reference standards for implementation, and (4) reporting requirements and/or intended use of results. The process of developing such a framework document of evaluation and assessment levels would provide an opportunity to analyse the various linkages between different components and identify missing links and articulations in need of strengthening.

Develop regionally based structures to support schools' evaluation and assessment practices

Bringing together national strategies and school practices is challenging in New Zealand's highly devolved education system. More locally or regionally based structures for school development could provide support that responds to local needs while helping to develop more consistently effective practice across New Zealand. A major step in this direction would be to reinforce the school support role of Regional Offices of the Ministry of Education. Being closer to the local level than the national Ministry, the Regional Offices could offer high quality advice to school professionals and support them in using their planning and reporting structures for continuous improvement. An important aspect of such a regional structure would be to establish collective knowledge-building and sharing so as to facilitate innovation and system learning. A regional school support structure could also serve as a platform for school leaders in the same area to collaborate and work towards a systematic approach to evaluation and assessment. These suggestions are in line with recent developments to strengthen the regional role of the Ministry of Education, such as the establishment of a "Student Achievement Function" within the regions of the Ministry of Education.

Continue to build and strengthen teacher capacity for effective student assessment

Because student assessment plays such an important role at all levels of the education system, the needs for the development of teachers' professional assessment skills are large. School professionals need to develop not only the capacity to use, interpret and follow up on results obtained from nationally provided assessment tools, but also to

develop valid and reliable assessment tools to meet their own specific local needs. Initial teacher training and professional learning opportunities need to provide teachers with expertise and skills to be innovative in the design of personalised assessment approaches that respond to the diversity of learner profiles within the comprehensive school. Teachers also need to be trained to be sensitive to cultural and linguistic aspects of learning when assessing students from diverse backgrounds. Skills for communicating assessment results effectively without oversimplifying the complex issues involved in student learning are also essential. Exemplars of good practice in data collection, reporting and communication should be provided nationally to make sure some minimal requirements are met. Central agencies could consider developing a unique set of teachers' competencies in assessment to set clear targets for teacher initial training and professional development in this area.

Enhance school capacity in the collection, analysis and interpretation of school-wide data

Alongside general training in assessment literacy, effort should be directed towards increasing the skills of school staff in the use and interpretation of data for school improvement. Schools need to be further supported in their approaches to collecting school-wide assessment data and in disaggregating data for relevant sub-groups including different ethnic and language groups. More emphasis should also be placed on using data to monitor the effectiveness of school programmes, initiatives and teaching approaches for different sub-groups of students. There is also a need to focus on helping schools interpret and translate evaluative information into action. Boards of Trustees play a key role in school evaluation and need to develop the capacity to understand, interpret and make decisions based on school results. They should be supported through learning opportunities that help demystify data, make data more user-friendly and give Boards confidence to hold “courageous conversations” with their principal.

Further develop and embed the National Standards within the New Zealand assessment system

There are a range of options for the Ministry of Education to work towards embedding the standards over time and support schools in making reliable and consistent assessments against the standards. First, the introduction of National Standards should be used as an opportunity to further focus attention on building assessment capacity across the primary school system. This requires ongoing investment in professional development opportunities that support teachers' capacity to assess students specifically in the context of the National Standards. Second, it is essential to clarify the role of the existing assessment tools in relation to the new National Standards. It would be helpful to ensure that the benchmarks of National Standards are more closely aligned with the progression levels and measurement scales of the existing assessment tools. There is also a need to properly align primary school standards with those of secondary school so as to facilitate transitions for students. Third, the national authorities should encourage and support systematic moderation procedures linked to the reporting on standards. Moderation can improve the dependability of overall teacher judgements and remediation strategies while also providing valuable professional learning for teachers. Fourth, it would be helpful to establish feedback channels for teachers to report on how the National Standards work for them in practice, and where they would suggest improvements. Finally, while it is

important to further embed the National Standards in the assessment system, it is essential to sustain work on learning progressions in subject matters other than literacy and numeracy.

Consolidate teaching standards as a basis for career-progression appraisal

A framework of teaching standards is essential as a reference point for teacher appraisal. The current co-existence of two sets of teaching standards in the country as well as the lack of clarity about their respective use call for their consolidation into a single set of standards so there is a clear shared understanding of what counts as accomplished teaching. The consolidated standards should describe competencies for different roles and career steps of teachers. This would recognise the variety of responsibilities in today's schools, and teachers' acquired knowledge, skill sets and expertise developed while on the job. Alignment between teaching standards and a career structure for teachers would then allow teacher registration to be conceived as career-progression appraisal. This should include an element of externality such as an accredited external evaluator, be based on classroom observation and a range of data required to demonstrate teacher effectiveness and take into consideration the teacher's own views.

Strengthen developmental appraisal as part of performance management and ensure it is linked to professional development and school development

Given that there are risks in bringing together both accountability and improvement functions in a single teacher appraisal process, it is recommended that teacher appraisal as part of performance management processes is conceived as predominantly for improvement (developmental appraisal). This developmental appraisal would be an internal process carried out by line managers, senior peers, and the school principal, but the process would need to be strengthened and validated externally. It should include self-appraisal, peer appraisal, classroom observation, and structured conversations and regular feedback by the school principal and experienced peers. The main outcome would be feedback on the performance of the teacher which would lead to a plan for professional development. To ensure effective school-based teacher appraisal, it is important to build capacity in appraisal methods by preparing members of the management group or expert teachers to undertake specific appraisal functions within the school. It is also important to reinforce the linkages between teacher professional development and school development. The schools that associate identified individual needs with school priorities, and that also manage to develop the corresponding professional development activities, are likely to perform well.

Include a focus on teacher appraisal in school evaluation processes

Given that the systems of school evaluation and teacher appraisal have both the objectives of maintaining standards and improving student performance, there are likely to be great benefits from the synergies between school evaluation and teacher appraisal. To achieve the greatest impact, the focus of school evaluation should either be linked to or have an effect on the focus of teacher appraisal. This indicates that school evaluation

should comprise the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. This is already the case in ERO’s school reviews through the choice of “effective teaching” as one of the six dimensions of effective practice, the comment on teacher quality overall in the school, classroom observations, and the dialogue with teachers. School evaluation could also play a role in guaranteeing that systematic and coherent developmental appraisal is conducted in all schools across New Zealand. An option is that ERO reviews, in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, include the review of the processes in place to organise developmental appraisal, holding the school’s Board of Trustees accountable as necessary. This would ensure that minimum standards for developmental teacher appraisal are met and that every teacher receives proper professional feedback.

Strengthen school leadership for effective teacher appraisal and school self-review

Schools also need to build appropriate expertise related to effective teacher appraisal and school self-review. Given the key role of school leadership in New Zealand’s devolved education context, it is difficult to envisage either effective teacher appraisal or productive school self-review without strong leadership capacity. Hence, the recruitment, development and support for school leaders is of key importance in creating and sustaining strong school evaluation cultures. There is a need to continue building the credibility and competencies of all school leaders with an educational focus so that they can lead self-review processes and operate effective feedback and coaching arrangements for their staff. Alongside extending access to professional development programmes for all those who exercise a leadership role, other elements of the national strategy might include broad dissemination to school leaders of resources and support for whole school review, including the direct evaluation of instructional practice and the strategic planning of teacher professional development. Further enhancing the performance appraisal of school leadership is also important to provide leaders with external feedback, identifying areas of needed improvement and offering targeted support to improve practice.

Maintain an emphasis on the improvement function of school evaluation

It is a challenge to find the perfect balance in school evaluation between the collaborative use of data for school improvement and the use of data for accountability. The policy implications are to maintain and reinforce the improvement focus and to help schools develop a strong sense of internal accountability through which it becomes easier for them to have a credible story to tell to external bodies. As the cornerstone of the quality assurance system, self-review needs both consolidation and enhancing. Learning to measure what is valued should be modelled and promoted by the Ministry and ERO. Ongoing support is needed to ensure that professionals in schools have the capacity to conduct effective self-review covering the whole breadth of the curriculum and focus on raising learning outcomes in all the areas it covers. Capacity for school evaluation and improvement could also be strengthened by involving practitioners integrally in the role of peer evaluators or participating in ERO review teams. The education system could draw on the expertise of principals and school staff from leading-edge schools to engage them as change agents working with other schools to build good practice across the system.

Support schools' collaboration with improvement partners and other schools to develop their self-review work

While self-review may suggest an internal self-sufficient process, there is strong evidence internationally as well as in New Zealand that schools benefit from the support and challenge of a critical friend. Working with an “experienced other”, such as a professional development provider or in-school leader of professional learning, is likely to result in deeper learning. At policy level, such arrangements may be either strongly encouraged or institutionalised. There is also much potential for schools to collaborate and learn from each other in the process of school evaluation. Providing funding for clusters of schools to work collaboratively would provide an incentive and stimulate collegial networking, peer exchange, sharing and critiquing of practice, fostering a sense of common direction. A starting point could be with principals working together to identify common challenges, devising common strategies and approaches to peer evaluation. The process would benefit from the appointment of an external facilitator or critical friend chosen and agreed by the principals themselves. Within such clusters of schools, professional learning communities of leaders and teachers from neighbouring schools could pool existing data from a range of schools and build a collective understanding of how to interpret such outcome data.

Ensure that school annual reporting is used effectively for school evaluation and education system evaluation

Given a significant level of dissatisfaction with annual reporting by schools, the nature and use of these reports should be revisited. There is a need to closely examine the relative costs and benefits of different forms of reporting and the form that teachers and school leaders would find most productive. If self-review and ERO reviews are both formative, the annual review should reflect ways in which they have contributed to professional development and school improvement. There is a need to bring clarity as to whose interests annual reports are designed to serve. To optimise the use of the data brought together by schools in their annual reports, it would be important that the reports are not merely used as provider of data for higher levels of the educational administration, but that schools also receive useful feedback based on the information provided. The reports could be used as a basis for Regional Offices of the Ministry of Education to engage in discussion with schools and Boards of Trustees. There is also a need to strengthen the alignment between school annual reporting, school self-review and ERO reviews. If the annual reports are to be used for education system monitoring, there is a need to ensure greater consistency in the format and content of the reports across schools.

Clarify the ways in which information from national standards reporting will be used

Resistance to National Standards partly stems from concerns about the lack of clarity regarding the use of the information from standards-based reporting by the national authorities. It is of utmost importance to clarify what kind of information standards-based reporting can and cannot provide, who should have access to the information and what uses of the information are considered appropriate. For the purpose of reporting to parents, consideration should be given to introducing a nuanced reporting system that describes different levels of individual student achievement and progress, rather than just a cut-off point for determining whether students are above or below the standards. For the

purpose of school evaluation, it should be ensured that the information from standards reporting is actually used and useful for schools in reviewing their progress and improving teaching and learning approaches. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that the focus of National Standards on literacy and numeracy does not marginalise other learning areas where measurement of school performance and progress is more challenging. For the purpose of national system monitoring, appropriate moderation arrangements need to be in place to ensure that the reporting information is reliable and nationally consistent.

Continue to broaden the collection of data on diverse learner groups to monitor education system progress

In order to continue to meet information needs to adequately monitor progress towards national education goals, it is important to strengthen the information system regarding diverse groups of students. This could involve further disaggregating information on different sub-groups of Pasifika students and other ethnic groups in regions where such information is relevant. The immediate priority is to ensure better monitoring information towards the Ministry's strategic goal of "Māori achieving education success as Māori." This requires collecting data on student learning outcomes in Māori-medium schools and settings. Implementing a revised version of NEMP in Māori-medium settings has the potential to produce highly valuable system-level information. To design adequate strategies for second language learners, the Ministry should consider gathering more information on students' linguistic profiles. In particular, it would be useful to begin collecting data on the languages students speak at home and proficiency in their first and second language. More comprehensive data on the linguistic profiles of students would be helpful in designing a language strategy at the national level and making decisions about specific resources and support allocated to second language learners.